

Art Speaks

TEP Exhibition: *America in the '30s:
Prints from the Federal Art Project*



Intentions

- Students will create a mini-poster that illustrates a social cause.
- Enable students to discuss the idea of a "social cause" and why they are relevant to local and global communities.
- Students will choose a social cause of their choice and communicate it through writing and visual media.
- Students will examine the idea of citizenship by communicating ideas with peers and teachers.

Materials

- Construction paper (various colors) or card stock 8 ½ x11
- Crayons and markers
- Wacky scissors (optional)
- Recycled magazines (with text and images)
- Glue sticks

Backdrop

The prints selected for this exhibit are by artists associated with the California division of the Works Progress Administration (WPA.) The WPA was created in 1935 to provide employment, encouragement, and, in part, support for American artists during the Great Depression. A major success of the program was in bringing the language of arts to remote areas of the United States. The project is also credited with initiating graphic arts workshops and commissions for printmakers throughout the nation and sponsoring the production of some 95,000 prints. This printmaking initiative made it possible for artists to produce high quality multiple versions of their originals. Much of the work produced was democratic in nature and in theme, and spoke to social issues that were happening at the time. This exhibit of prints by California artists includes strong images that help the contemporary viewer understand day-to-day life during the Great Depression in the western United States. Among the pieces are examples of both lithography and wood engraving techniques.



Conversations

- What is a social cause? These are typically issues affecting communities that people perceive as critically important.
- What are ways that these issues can impact our communities?
- Can you think of different ways people communicate ideas that are important to them?
- Which are more powerful, words or pictures?
- What issues are being addressed in the TEP exhibitions? The Library of Congress link below has great examples too.

Activity

- After introducing the project, as well as background and conversation questions, have students decide on an idea for their social cause. On a plain sheet of white paper, students can sketch and layout a rough plan for their mini-poster. For younger students it's okay to create an imaginary social cause, for example, "Save all the bubblegum!" Also younger students can produce images only, to convey their ideas.
- Have students create a slogan for their cause. This can be one word or a sentence. Explain that slogans are words or phrases that will catch the reader's attention. They are often larger than other elements and/or positioned to catch someone's eye.
- Using construction paper, students can create a dynamic background onto which they layer text and visual elements. This can include cut borders and/or shapes using contrasting colors of paper and wacky scissors.
- Next, have students add their slogan onto their paper using crayons or markers and/or cut letters from magazines.
- Working from their sketch, students can draw and/or collage their ideas onto the page. Collage is regarded as a work of visual arts made from an assembling of different forms to create a new whole. Explain that their drawings or collage should somehow be related to their social cause.
- Students can share their social causes with the class and discuss why they chose them.
- Option: Choose a cause (real or imaginary) at your school. Experiment with xeroxing copies of the posters when students finish and hang them around the classroom or school.

LINKS WE LIKE:

[LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: WPA POSTERS](#)

[WPA POSTER LESSON PLAN](#)

[VISUAL ARTS AND COMMUNITY LESSON](#)

[SKILLSHARE POSTER VIDEO](#)

Links to the Core

Visual Arts:

- Explore a variety of art materials while learning new techniques and processes.
- Students demonstrate how history, culture, and the visual arts can influence each other in making and studying works of art

Language Arts:

- Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse formats and media, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.
- Explain how specific images (e.g., a diagram showing how a machine works) contribute to and clarify a text.
- Writing: Draft ideas on paper in an organized manner, utilizing pictures with labels/words.

Social Studies:

- Evaluate key factors that determine how a community develops.
- Describe the rights and responsibilities inherent in being a contributing member of a community.